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ABSTRACT

This paper presents findings of a study that examined Missouri high school principals' perceptions of the effectiveness of various disciplinary procedures, with a focus on in-school suspension (ISS). A survey mailed to 200 Missouri high school principals elicited 159 responses, a 77 percent response rate. The questionnaire asked principals to identify the disciplinary procedures currently in use at their schools and to specify under which conditions they perceived each measure to be most effective. Inschool suspension (ISS) was used by 88 percent of the respondents, who perceived it to be the most effective sanction for serious incidents that disrupted the school environment. ISS was limited to behavior that, although hostile and threatening, was not significantly physical, violent, dangerous, and/or illegal. Smoking in the rest room or truancy are examples of such behavior. Although the principals rarely utilized corporal punishment, they perceived out-of-school suspension (OSS) as an effective measure for more serious incidents, such as oncampus possession of alcohol or marijuana, fighting, extortion, being under the influence of alcohol or drugs, obscene language toward a teacher, and physical sexual harassment. OSS was utilized by 98 percent of the sample. One table is included. (LMI)

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PERCEPTIONS OF MISSOURI HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPALS REGARDING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF IN-SCHOOL SUSPENSION AS A DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURE

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Perceptions of Missouri High School Principals Regarding the Effectiveness of In-School Suspension as a Disciplinary Procedure

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceived effectiveness of various disciplinary procedures by Missouri high school principals, and in doing so, determine whether In-School Suspension (ISS) is perceived to be an effective disciplinary procedure by Missouri high school principals, representing each of the Missouri School district classifications, 1A, 2A, 3A, and 4A. The study sought to determine what percentage of Missouri high schools currently utilize ISS as a disciplinary procedure, and for what types of disciplinary incidents is ISS perceived to be the most effective disciplinary measure.

Method

The study was conducted by means of a descriptive survey utilizing a questionnaire designed to record the principal's responses regarding what disciplinary procedures are currently utilized at their respective high schools and what disciplinary procedures they perceived to be the most effective measure for a respective disciplinary incident. The disciplinary procedures included: verbal reprimand (REP), detention (DET), corporal punishment (CP), in-school suspension (ISS), out-of-school suspension (OSS), recommended expulsion (EXP) and other. The sample consisted of 200 high schools randomly chosen from the population of 562 Missouri high schools. Of the sample, 159 high school principals responded, establishing a response rate of 77%.

Results

Missouri high school principals perceived each of the disciplinary procedures listed on the questionnaire, to include ISS, as the most effective disciplinary procedure for one or more respective disciplinary incidents, with the exception of Corporal Punishment which is utilized in only 28% of Missouri high schools and was not perceived to be the most effective procedure for any of the respective disciplinary incidents.

From the results of this study, ISS is currently utilized by 88% of Missouri high schools and was perceived to be the most effective procedure for serious disciplinary incidents involving serious disruptions to the school environment, yet not so serious as to necessitate Out-of-School Suspension. ISS was perceived as the most effective procedure for behavior which, although hostile and threatening, was not significantly physical, violent, dangerous, and/or illegal.

In contrast to Corporal Punishment, the disciplinary procedure of Out-of-School Suspension is currently utilized by 98% of Missouri high schools and is often perceived by principals to be the most effective disciplinary procedure for respective disciplinary incidents. In fact, the study reflects that Out-of-School Suspension received a higher percentage of responses on more items than any other procedure and this total number of items was equal to the combined totals of Verbal Reprimand, Detention, and ISS.

Conclusions

The related literature reflects there are serious concerns regarding the use of the traditional disciplinary procedures of Corporal Punishment and Out-of-School Suspension. The literature suggests there is an increasing need for educators to examine alternative disciplinary

procedures and that ISS may be an effective disciplinary alternative to the more traditional measures.

The findings of this study illustrate that ISS is utilized by a large percentage of Missouri high schools and is definitely perceived by Missouri high school principals to be an effective disciplinary procedure, but only in reference to certain types of disciplinary incidents. It's perceived effectiveness is limited to, and somewhat dependent upon, the type of disciplinary incident that has occurred. ISS, although perceived to be effective in limited instances, is not viewed by Missouri high school principals as a disciplinary panacea.

The findings of this study illustrate that although Missouri high school principals rarely utilize Corporal Punishment, they frequently perceive of Out-of-School Suspension as an effective disciplinary procedure. The findings reflect that despite the presence of an ISS program and its perceived effectiveness for certain types of disciplinary incidents, Missouri high school principals view many behaviors as too serious for ISS and in these instances perceive Out-of-School Suspension to be the most effective disciplinary procedure.

Table 1

Number (and Percent) Responding to Survey Questions 1-15

No.	Questionnaire Item		REP	DET	CP	ISS	OSS	EXP	Other
1	Smoking in restroom	N	4	14	3	60	40		17
		%	(3)	(10)	(2)	(44)	(29)		(20)
2	Student extorts money from another student			5 (4)		19 (14)	96 (73)	8 (6)	4 (3)
3	Student uses "cheat sheet" on test		13 (11)	23 (19)		32 (26)	2 (2)		53 (43)
4	Possession of alcohol while on campus		1 (1)			6 (5)	111 (87)	4 (3)	6 (5)
5	Use of obscene language		31 (22)	56 (40)	5 (4)	29 (21)	8 (6)		11 (8)
6	Fighting on campus			3 (2)	2 (2)	31 (23)	94 (69)		7 (5)
7	Stealing from another student		1 (1)	3 (3)	1 (1)	40 (34)	59 (50)	2 (2)	13 (11)
8	Disrupting class; won't stop talking		19 (14)	73 (55)		30 (22)	4 (3)		8 (6)
9	Wrote on restroom wall		4 (3)	37 (29)	2 (2)	41 (33)	13 (10)	1 (1)	28 (22)
10	Loaded handgun brought to school		1 (1)			1 (1)	15 (11)	114 (86)	2 (2)
11	Students embracing and kissing		88 (64)	34 (25)		8 (6)			7 (5)
12	Student lies to teacher		41 (30)	61 (45)		23 (17)			12 (9)
13	Throwing food in cafeteria		7 (5)	54 (41)	1 (1)	33 (25)	5 (4)	1 (1)	31 (24)
14	Possession of marijuana on campus						89 (71)	31 (25)	5 (4)
15	Truant from school		4 (3)	39 (30)	1 (1)	65 (50)	3 (2)		19 (14)

Table 2

Number (and Percent) Responding to Survey Questions 16-30

No.	Questionnaire Item		REP	DET	CP	ISS	OSS	EXP	Other
16	Carrying a knife while on campus	N	10	2		14	68	23	9
		%	(8)	(2)		(11)	(54)	(18)	(7)
17	"Bullying" other students		24 (18)	21 (16)	2 (2)	56 (42)	25 (19)		6 (5)
18	Disrespectful behavior toward teacher		3 (2)	27 (21)	3 (3)	53 (41)	36 (28)		8 (6)
19	Sale of marijuana while on campus					1 (1)	33 (27)	87 (70)	3 (2)
20	Repeatedly tardy to class		3 (2)	90 (62)	1 (1)	25 (19)			15 (11)
21	Verbally harassing visitors at a ballgame		19 (16)	25 (21)	1 (1)	30 (25)	10 (8)		37 (30)
22	Repeatedly not completing assignments		19 (15)	43 (33)	1 (1)	28 (22)	1 (1)		38 (29)
23	Possession of fireworks on campus		4 (3)	18 (13)	1 (1)	36 (26)	74 (53)	3 (2)	5 (4)
24	Under influence of marijuana		1 (1)			2 (2)	101 (80)	14 (11)	9 (7)
25	Obscene language toward teacher			3 (2)		31 (23)	93 (69)	1 (1)	7 (5)
26	Physical sexual harassment		2 (2)	6 (4)		21 (16)	89 (66)	3 (2)	14 (10)
27	Repeatedly failed to obey bus driver		2 (2)	20 (15)	1 (1)	17 (13)	11 (8)		81 (61)
28	Under influence of alcohol			1 (1)		4 (3)	113 (85)	9 (7)	6 (5)
29	Gang behavior on campus		3 (2)	2 (2)		8 (6)	88 (68)	19 (15)	9 (7)
30	Verbal sexual harassment		10 (8)	15 (12)	1 (1)	45 (35)	45 (35)		14 (11)